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## THE FUNCTION OF THE FARM SCHOOL

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Quite a story lies behind the letter printed below. In the spring of 1908 the principal of one of the public schools of Dubuque, Mr. B. J. Horchem, purchased a small farm beyond the outskirts of the city. It was very much run down, as the illustration shows. A tenant was put in possession and by the time the schools closed in June, repairs on the house were well on the way. The new owner did not invest in the farm either for personal profit or for the luxury of a summer residence, but because he wanted to try an experiment. He felt that the city boys, such as those in his school, needed something other than two months of idleness and mere play, and something other than the work in the shops, which in any event but few were old enough to undertake. Having been brought up on a farm himself, it seemed to him that farm life offered a solution of the problem presented.

An invitation having been given to some of the leaders among the boys to "come out and help," nearly twenty responded and came with more or less regularity throughout the two months. The result as far as the boys were concerned, were so satisfactory that Mr. Horchem is anxious to continue and expand his experiment into a permanent summer school. He has two plans in view, one of which might be called the immediate and the transitory, and the other a more thoroughgoing scheme, involving the entire reorganization of the school-system.

In the first place he wants the boys of a manufacturing city to know something of what the farm offers, before the pressure of circumstances forces them into shop or office work or into unskilled labor.

He believes that even one summer can serve to implant the germs of an ideal of the opportunity and rewards of farm life. He said that he would willingly take an entirely new set of boys to his farm next year, in order that others might see for themselves what otherwise they might never appreciate—that there is a world of work outside the factory and that there are other

fields of employment to choose from. Nearly one hundred boys are making plans for this farm for the coming summer.

Some of the educational views of the author of this experiment follow the letter.—EDITOR.

PARK HILL FARM SCHOOL

*President*—ROBERT E. YOUNG

*Manager*—AMOS F. PALEY

*Secretary*—ADALBERT T. WALLER

*Treasurer*—J. RUSSELL JOHNSTON

DUBUQUE, IA.

November 17, 1908

*Mr. John Morrison, Dubuque, Iowa:*

DEAR MR. MORRISON: Inclosed please find some of the pictures which were taken of some of us boys while at work on the farm during the summer.

No. 1 shows where some of us thought that it would be fine exercise to fix up the roadway.

No. 2 will give you an idea of how the approach looked after it had been finished.

No. 3 will give you an idea of how we used to go and come from work occasionally.

No. 4 shows you how we enjoyed playing or working around the barley stack.

No. 5—We were preparing a park around the tent you so kindly loaned us.

No. 6—We are planning on civic improvement around the tent.

No. 7—How we petted the cows when we had nothing else to do.

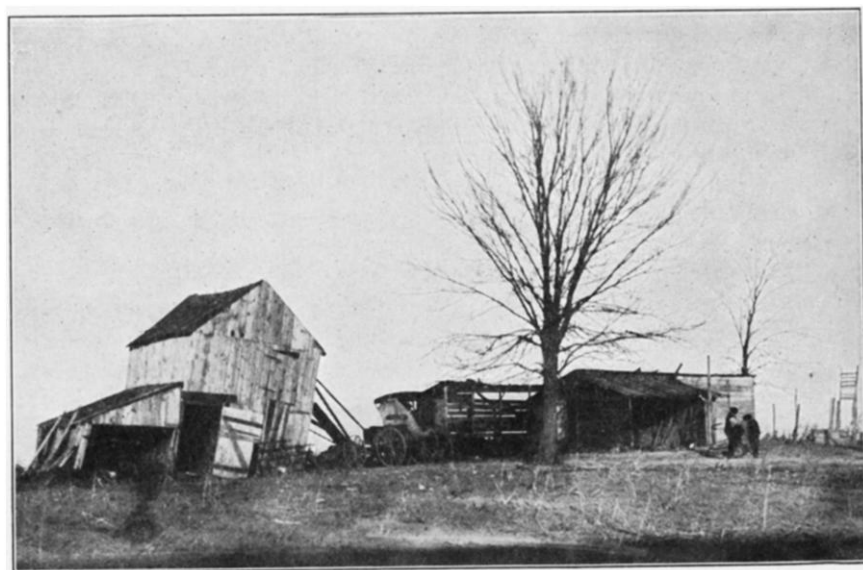
We regret that you did not find it convenient to visit us during the summer. As a whole we had a pleasant and profitable vacation. Professor Horchem suggests that we give you a short account of our efforts. In regard to the work we did, we must say that some of us did report to our parents when we came home and did not explain anything in particular. When they would say that they doubted if we did anything, we would reply that we did so many things that we could not remember anything in particular.

We did many different things. We learned much. We hoed vegetables, cultivated, fertilized, picked peas, also other vegetables, husked corn, went to market, and had other experiences in farming.

Our first taste of farm life was hoeing. We hoed the cabbages. Some of us hardly knew how to hoe, but now we consider ourselves experts. Then we cultivated onions. Of course we cut quite a few off, but we have learned much and would not do such a thing any more.



THE HOUSE AS WE FOUND IT



THE BARN AS WE FOUND IT

We all remember the time when we fertilized the tomatoes.

One of our most constant occupations was picking peas, of which there was a large patch.

Then came market days, when we took our produce to market. The first time the buggy was driven to market, it contained the general manager and the treasurer. These two officers went in their wide-brimmed rustic straw hats, upon which was showered a great deal of ridicule. Their first experience at marketing was not very pleasant. We all had a good laugh at their expense afterward. After that we took turns going to market, always taking care that we did not have our straw hats on. We hired a stand at the market, and there we could be found, selling our peas, beans, carrots, cabbages, beets, and other vegetables.

We carried our dinners, which we ate in the tent. Our suppers were cooked by Mrs. Honkomp, the lady of the place. We either ate them in the tent or in the shade outside. It is needless to say that we enjoyed the supper in the open, free air. We always slept well and feel that our condition has been physically benefited.

We did not work every day, sometimes three times a week, and sometimes only twice. During the hottest part of some days we played in the shade or rehearsed our band composed of such tin instruments as we could gather together. We had many lively debates, disputes, and discussions concerning our work, novels we had read, or topics concerning the welfare of the country; so you can see that we learned a great deal in discussing various things while we were working or taking a rest in the tent.

The most disagreeable part of the whole thing was the walk home. We did not fancy this journey, especially after the day's work.

There were many other boys that wanted to join, but we felt that there were no accommodations for so many, and that it would be too hard on Mrs. Honkomp to cook for them all.

We feel that to have a great many boys to take part it would be best to start early in spring with hotbeds and to have boys by fours to take plats of ground and start out in a scientific manner.

In the spring we will start early with hotbeds and incubators. We will work after school and Saturdays. We will engage in the raising of chickens, having, of course, a competent man to attend them in our absence. We will have a large number of new recruits, who, of course, will have their experience next summer, while we, the officers of the "Farm," and those who have had their experience last summer, will work in a more general way this summer teaching the new boys the things with which they are not familiar. There will also be a large number of boys who will join us, once the other boys inform them of their first taste of farm life.

We have suggested to Professor Horchem, and he has agreed to do all he can toward making arrangements by which we could have an orchard,



PREPARING FOR THE TENT



CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS

so that we could trim, prune, bud, and spray the trees. We would thereby get practice in taking care of fruit trees, and perhaps be able to make a little to help pay our expenses.

We are going to make an appeal to Professor Horchem to be permitted to edit a small journal, to which the boys and officers will contribute. It will be published monthly. It will inform the boys of all the markets, besides giving them helpful literature on farming.

We worked two or three days a week—that is, part of the time, for we were not without recreation. There was the cool, shady grove nearby, where we could play games, and the tent, where we could talk over the events of the day, and debate various questions, as stated above.

During the next summer, we will take short trips, such as the La Motte one, to various points of interest around here on the way to and fro noticing the methods of the most successful farmers and other things concerning our work.

And then, if we raise enough, which will not be improbable, we will go by wagon to the wilds of Wisconsin, the Dells of the Wisconsin River, for instance, for a week or two's camping.

Next summer a new barn will be erected in place of the old one seen in the cut. This will be quite an improvement on the old one.

Each boy will have so much ground to cultivate. He will be allowed to grow on it whatever he likes. At times all the boys will set to beautifying the whole place. They will have a taste of all kinds of work. If the roadway needs fixing, the boys will do it. A gate might be mended, or a fence repaired. The tents will have to be put up, the canvas mended. A small park should be laid out around the tents. The flowers would need care.

The cities and towns produce ten no-accounts and criminals where the country produces one or two, and this seems to be almost entirely due to the fact that on the farm the boy has something to do and does not spend his time loafing on the streets. It is a matter of common observation as well as of statistics that the bums and criminals with which the country is cursed come almost entirely from boys and girls who do not go to school or have no regular and definite work during the formative years, from nine to eighteen.

The life of the student is dissociated from the life of his home and his neighbors. He is taken away from and unfitted for the duties of his home and community. The school helps to make him feel strange in his own home and neighborhood instead



FIXING THE ROADWAY



GOING TO WORK



of helping him the better to understand and more thoroughly to enter into life about him.

There is no more edifying, dignified, and profitable occupation than that of agriculture, which is conducted in an intelligent, scientific, and painstaking manner. Through a "beautiful and bountiful garden" or a small farm, the working-classes can be shown how to shun the evils which arise from unsanitary and insufficient housing conditions, and how to secure after working hours and at their leisure some advantages of outdoor garden life, with opportunities for natural and beautiful occupation. By cultivating the soil, enough vegetables can be raised in a small garden, and enough eggs and meats can be secured from the poultry to pay more than half the grocery bill. Such gardens should lead many to see the advantages of land and cause many of them to leave the dark, dusty, and unhealthy city for fresh air and profitable undertaking. It is equally true that the children of the wealthy dwellers in hotels or apartment houses are in need of the freedom, the habit of work, and the interests that are developed by this outdoor life of productive activity.

Beside creating a love for the beautiful in nature, a love for a garden will in turn cause a love for a home and the desire to keep it up and improve it, and indirectly create a sentiment for larger public improvements, such as parks. We must begin with children, if we desire to continue and develop our civic pride.

The school ought to be a great beehive, buzzing with industry. We must find ways of letting the child live a more natural life, consisting of work and play, in both of which he will have more and more chance for initiative in proportion as he develops power of self-control and of controlling others.

By the time a boy has finished his eighth school year he should know whether he wants to be a carpenter, a farmer, or a professional man. He should therefore be placed in environments that permit observation of varied occupations. He should not only see the growing of fruits, vegetables, and grains for pleasure, but for profit, and he should be brought into contact with many industries, that he may have some intelligent basis for choice of the one he has the interest and capacity to follow. This

experience should enable him to take more intelligent direction of his own course and thus save valuable time and costly experience.

Our present system of education is a terrible mistake. It is a mistake from every point of view. It is a mistake in so far as the mere acquirement of knowledge is concerned. The mind cannot assimilate beyond a certain rate. If forced with facts faster than it can master them, they will soon be rejected again. They will not be permanently built into the intellectual fiber, but fall out of recollection after the examination for which they were gathered. It is a mistake because it makes study distasteful. It is a mistake to weaken and to destroy energy without which a trained intellect is useless. Success could not compensate for ill-health, which would make failure doubly bitter. Herbert Spencer gave these facts over a half-century ago.

In our present system of study the children are not the determining factors in planning the course of study. The course of study is the main consideration. In every school teachers are specializing more and more from year to year. The curriculum is specialized, but not upon any rational grouping of children, or the innate power or ability of the children.

Someone must break away from tradition. The public schools cannot do it. If it has to come through the normal school the process is too slow. It must be started by those who have taught in the country schools, graded schools, and high schools, and who have made a study of the "doctrine of interest." Who can say what would be the power for good in the establishment of a farm school, by one who knows what he wants, what men and women he wants; one who prepares his pupils through them in such a way that each pupil will feel that he has a part to play in life, and that he should know his part and play it well, instead of preparing for a special mark from grade to grade, from grades to high school, and from high school to the colleges and the universities?

We cannot make artists out of pupils by placing them in an art gallery. They must understand the sentiments and conception of the artist before they can really understand the picture. So

it is with work; so it is with play; so it is with study; so it is with nature. The boy does not appreciate the work of the soil, heat, and moisture until he gets in contact with work in the garden, or on the farm. He can be made to understand how an apparently worthless piece of ground can be made into one of the most attractive, pleasing, and profitable places in the community.

While the boy studies the growth of things, he also studies physics, chemistry, and botany. When he studies birds, trees, and animals, his love and desire for the beautiful is developed. When he builds his fences and pigeonhouses, and helps to make sidewalks, he secures a technical training which will involve mathematics. He will learn all about board-measure and the composition of concrete. He will look at plans and specifications and obtain the best authorities by consulting the best local architects and contractors, and read books and magazines on the subjects in which he is most interested. It will cause him to write to men of affairs, which will put him in business relations with the wider world. Natural conditions will be established, and each pupil will play his part, the part he can play best in life.

The kitten uses its paws and so learns how to handle them when compelled to. So the boys in this business course are coming into closer touch with real business, which now is growing up with the school and the world outside of it. The boys are not supposed to work all the time.

During twenty-five years of experience as a high-school teacher, county superintendent, and principal of a ward school, the writer has observed that not 65 per cent. of the boys finish the eighth grade. They are usually boys that wish to do things. They don't care about our superlatively correct language. They not only want to know things but have the habit of doing things. They don't want our present dose of education. All our pleading and forcing cannot retain them, even the best of them. Our methods are too bookish. If any change is made, it must be made by someone who has had the experience in grade work and who has been accustomed to consider the gradual development of the child through the grades, one who is not dominated by college

entrance examinations, one who will do away with much drill, too much cram, and too narrow a range of subjects, but will always consider the development of the child. The man who makes a success of the new school must have the qualifications of a president of a university. According to Dr. Jordan's view it will be the duty of such a man to create a peculiar school-atmosphere. He must set the pace, must frame its ideals, choose the men in whom those ideals can be realized. It is through the men he chooses that the new school will become a living thing. This man must co-operate with his helpers. His noblest work is that of maker of leaders. It is not what he himself can do, that first concerns the school. His personal powers, skill, or versatilities are of little moment. It will be what he can discern and divine in others that will gauge his success. It will be his instinct to know what the best work of others may be, and how he can use it in the fabric he is building. Long head and long patience he must needs have, for he will often wait years for men to grow to what he expects of them, and others to whom he can look for the right kind of growth. He must have the instinct to judge men, and to estimate what men say of men. He must be keen to recognize in others qualities of worth, which he himself may not possess. He must have the wisdom to foster individual freedom and the firmness to check that freedom that spends itself in futile, erratic, and sentimental effort.

#### GENERAL PLAN FOR PRACTICAL EDUCATION

1. Schools to be in the suburbs of our cities.
2. Schools to be in session the entire year, but only half the time to be spent indoors. Schoolroom work to be done chiefly in the winter and in bad weather.
3. Less deskwork. More laboratory, shop, and garden work. The active aspect of education now seen chiefly in the kindergarten to be maintained throughout the grades.
4. Initiative to be taken by children. All the leading trades, occupations, and professions to be carried on and opportunities to be open for the study of the same under trained workers. When at work under this direction, in field or shop, the need of further theoretic study or knowledge is found by the pupil and he will go to the schoolroom to get the needed work.
5. No written examinations. The test of ability will be found in the work done. If work is well done, examination is unneces-

sary; if poorly done, there is evident need for further study and effort. There should be no more need of formal examination here than in the business world.

*Education is life*—not preparation for life.

*Interest* is wanting to know what to do next.

*Wisdom* consists in knowing what to do next.

*Virtue* is the doing.

*Civilization* has not advanced by *words*, but by *acts* and *deeds*.

To plan *action* is the duty of the school.